

Chapter 7



The Swinging Door

After the disappointment of 1844, the Millerite movement split into two groups. One group, which Miller later joined, recognized that nothing really happened on October 22, 1844,¹ and continued to look for the soon coming of Christ. These Adventists rejected the sanctuary reinterpretation of the 1844 message and became known as “open-door Adventists.”² The other group reinterpreted the prophecy of the 2300 days to apply to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, believed the door of mercy was shut, and became known as “shut-door Adventists.” From this latter group came the founders of

¹ Knight, *Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism*, pp. 131, 132.

² Ibid., p. 131.

the Seventh-day Adventist church.³ The purpose of this chapter is to document what I call “the swinging door,” which traces this group’s developing understanding of “truth” from 1844 to 1851.

There were several “doors” in early Adventist theology. However, *at first* all these doors referred to the belief that “the door of mercy” was shut, or that probation had closed. “The close of probation” is a term well known in Adventist circles and refers to a point in time when salvation will no longer be available.

The Millerites believed that the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–12 applied to their experience. They had given the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom,” as they expected Christ to come to the earth on October 22, 1844. The shut-door Adventists, who continued to believe that October 22, 1844, marked an important milestone in prophetic fulfillment, proceeded to build on the parable of the ten virgins. In the parable “those who were ready went in with him into the marriage feast; and the door was shut.”⁴ Believing themselves to be the only ones who were ready, they taught that those who rejected the October 22, 1844, message were typified by the foolish virgins of the parable who, upon knocking at the door, were told by the Bridegroom, “I do not know you.”

In other words, the “little flock” or “Advent band,” as they called themselves, were the only ones for whom mercy was still available. For all the rest, the door was shut.

Simultaneous with the shut door of the parable of the ten virgins, the shut-door Adventists believed that Christ shut the door to the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary by moving into the second apartment. Ellen White “saw” this

³ Ibid., pp. 131, 132.

⁴ See Mt. 25:10.

change take place.⁵ The foolish virgins—everyone except the Advent band—then no longer could benefit from Christ’s atonement in heaven because they were unaware that Christ had moved from one apartment to the next. Therefore, as stated earlier, the “door” of the parable of the ten virgins and the “door” of the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary were both “shut doors” for those who did not accept the reinterpretation of the 2300 day prophecy.

With this short introduction we will give the evidence for the “swinging door.”

The door shuts—the first swing

On October 22, 1844, Adventists⁶ believed that the door of mercy slammed shut for all those who did not accept their reinterpretation of the 2300 day prophecy.

⁵ “I was then shown what did take place in heaven as the prophetic periods ended in 1844. I saw that as the ministration of Jesus in the Holy place ended, and he closed the door of that apartment, a great darkness settled upon those who had heard, and had rejected the messages of Christ’s coming, and they lost sight of him. Jesus then clothed himself with precious garments. Around the bottom of his robe was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. He had suspended from his shoulders a breastplate of curious work. And as he moved, it glittered like diamonds, magnifying letters which looked like names written, or engraven upon the breastplate. After he was fully attired, with something upon his head which looked like a crown, angels surrounded him, and in a flaming chariot he passed within the second vail [sic]. I was then bid to take notice of the two apartments of the heavenly Sanctuary. The curtain, or door, was opened, and I was permitted to enter.” Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 158.

⁶ That is, the “shut-door Adventists” who became Seventh-day Adventists.

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then *forever* closed to the world.⁷

Almost all Adventists, including Mr. Miller, did, for a short time after their disappointment in 1844, believe that the world had received its last warning....But the idea that the work of *the gospel was finished was soon renounced*.⁸

After the passing of the time of expectation, in 1844, Adventists still believed the Saviour's coming to be very near; they held that they had reached an important crisis, and that *the work of Christ as man's intercessor before God, had ceased*. Having given the warning of the Judgment near, they felt that their work for the world was done, and they lost their burden of soul for the salvation of sinners, while the bold and blasphemous scoffing of the ungodly seemed to them another evidence that the Spirit of God had been withdrawn from the rejecters of his mercy. All this confirmed them in the belief that probation had ended, or, as they then expressed it, "the door of mercy was shut."⁹

The door opens—the second swing

Some time between October 22, 1844, and the end of December 1844, many Adventists gave up the teaching of the shut door. In the context of supporting the visions of his wife, Ellen, James White records this statement.

When she received her first vision, Dec. 1844, she [EGW] and all the band in Portland, Maine, (where her parents then resided) *had given up the midnight-cry, and shut door, as being in the past*.¹⁰

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 63.

⁸ Editor's note, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1884, Vol. 4, p. 499.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

¹⁰ James White, *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* May, 30, 1847, p. 22 as reproduced in Knight, *Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism*, p. 176.

This shows that Ellen White had given up the shut door sometime before December 1844. In 1848 Ellen White wrote the following letter to Joseph Bates.¹¹ In this letter she recounts her vision “about the Bridegroom’s coming” that she received in February 1845. She gives evidence that a large number of Adventists had given up the shut door.

The view about the Bridegroom’s coming I had about the middle of February, 1845, while in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others. *Many of them did not believe in a shut door.* I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief [in context, unbelief in a shut door] seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She traveled and [had] been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. *She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut.* I had known nothing of their difference.¹²

These statements from James and Ellen White demonstrate that at least a fairly large group of Adventists had given up the shut door, and thus documents the second swing of the door. For a short period of time the door of mercy was open again.

The door shuts again—the third swing

The first two swings of the door give the historical background to this important “third swing” of the door. So far in our study we have seen many reinterpretations of

¹¹ Joseph Bates is a well known figure in SDA history who believed in, and supported, the visions of EGW for many years, but later, privately renounced them. See Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 225–231.

¹² A. L. White, *Ellen G. White and The Shut Door Question*, Letter 3, 1847, pp. 49–51. Printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, p. 418.

changing “truth”: from 1843 to 1844; from Christ coming to the earth in 1844, to Christ entering the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. Now, we see Adventists flip-flopping on the “truth” of the shut door. This third swing of the door is one the Adventists have tried to explain away or deny,¹³ for it completely undermines the prophetic authority of Ellen White. As this swing of the door is often questioned in Adventism, I will give more documentation to this swing than I did to the first two.

The following evidence will show that the “shut-door” Adventists in general, and James and Ellen White in particular, held to a shut-door theology from December 1844 to about October 22, 1851.¹⁴ We will show that Ellen White *through her visions* taught that the door of mercy was shut. Here are the pertinent parts of her first vision received in December 1844.

Others [open door Adventists] rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as *impossible* for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as *all the wicked world which God had rejected*. They fell all the way along the path one after another, until we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming.¹⁵

¹³ See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question*, (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1971). See also, Robert W. Olson, *The “Shut Door” Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1982).

¹⁴ We will see that this shut door was somewhat modified in 1849.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, “To the Remnant Scattered Abroad,” in *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* May 30, 1847, p. 14. Reproduced in Knight, *The Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism*, p. 172.

From this first vision we understand two things. First, EGW was shown that it was impossible for the people who renounced the Millerite message, or its reinterpretation, to be saved. Second, God had rejected *all* the wicked world.

Ellen White's second vision in February 1845 teaches the same shut door. Continuing on with the letter to Joseph Bates, quoted earlier, EGW shows that it was her vision which caused this group in Portland, Maine to renounce their "error" of giving up the shut door. This makes it clear that EGW taught a shut door *through her vision*. This group, as we saw before, did not believe in a shut door.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest and Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power, setting the truth home to their hearts.

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.

*Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.*¹⁶

We see that Ellen White's first two visions taught that the door of mercy was closed for everyone outside the little band of Adventists. While they had given up the shut door teaching for a short time, her visions corrected this "error" and the door was shut—again.

There is yet more evidence that this is exactly what Ellen White believed. In another part of this same letter to Joseph Bates, she describes incidents in connection with her first

¹⁶ A. L. White, *Ellen G. White and The Shut Door Question*, Letter 3, 1847, pp. 49–51. Printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, pp. 417–419.

vision. Two things should be noted: first, there is evidence—not proof—that Ellen White may have obtained the material or ideas for her first “vision” from Joseph Turner. Second, Ellen White’s first vision agreed with Turner’s understanding of “truth.” It will be seen that Turner was an avowed believer in the radical shut door of mercy.

Perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions. *At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it [closed door] up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had.* I know not what time J. Turner got his paper. *I knew he had one out and one was in the house,* but I knew not what was in it, for I had not read a word in it....After I had the vision and God gave me light, he bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. *I disobeyed the Lord,* and instead of remaining at home, where the meeting was to be that night, I got in a sleigh in the morning and rode three or four miles and there I found Joseph Turner. He merely inquired how I was and if I was in the way of my duty. *I said nothing, for I knew I was not.* I passed up (to the) chamber [either bedroom or sitting room in Mr. Turner’s home] and *did not see him again for two hours,* when he came up, asked if I was to be at meeting that night. I told him, No. He said he wanted to hear my vision and thought it duty for me to go home. I told him I should not. He said no more, but went away.

Very early next morning Joseph Turner called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all. After I had got through he said *he had told out the same last evening.*¹⁷

The above reference makes it patently evident that Joseph Turner, upon hearing the details of EGW’s first vision, which taught the shut door, said it was the *same*

¹⁷ Ibid.

thing he had said the evening before.¹⁸ This is evidence that EGW agreed with Turner. But what did Joseph Turner teach? In *The Advent Mirror*, of January 1845, is found a long article by A. Hale and Joseph Turner¹⁹ which “explains” the parable of the ten virgins, giving arguments in favor of the shut door of mercy. Here is just one excerpt.

But can any sinners be converted if the door is shut. Of course they cannot, though changes that may appear to be conversions may take place. The state of mankind before God, would be very much as it has been in cases where communities have been given up of God to destruction....But to think of laboring to convert the great masses of the world at such a time, would be as idle as it would have been of the Israelites, when they were down by the Red sea, to have turned about to convert the Egyptians.²⁰

¹⁸ From the this letter we know that Joseph Turner had written a paper *supporting the shut door*. Ellen White knew he had a paper out, knew it was in the house and claimed not to know what was in it. She went to his house, against the will of the Lord, spent two hours by herself and then went back home. We now know from research within the last thirty years that Ellen White was a copious copier of other people’s works, if not an outright plagiarist. We know that even some portions of her visions were copied from books published *before* her visions were received. See Walter Rea, *The White Lie*, (M & R Publications, Box 2056, Turlock, CA 95381, 1982) With these facts in mind, it is interesting to note the circumstances of this letter. Could it be that the information EGW related in her “vision” regarding the shut door actually came from Joseph Turner? We should note that Turner was the first to hear EGW’s first vision and he said, “he had told out the same last evening.” (See Robert B. Tower, *The True Story of the Beginning of Seventh-day Adventism and of Mrs. Ellen G. White’s Claims*, printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, pp. 416, 417.)

¹⁹ See Knight, *Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism*, pp. 133–136, for this complete article.

²⁰ A. Hale and J. Turner, *The Advent Mirror*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1845, as reproduced in *Ibid.*, p. 136.

We see that EGW and Joseph Turner taught the same shut-door theology. Additional evidence that Ellen White taught the shut door can be seen from the writings of her husband, James White.²¹ He wrote the following in 1850, approximately six years after EGW's first vision.

[The cry] "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" was actually raised, swelled louder and louder throughout the land, until that advent people were fully awake, anxiously expecting to see Jesus on the tenth day of the seventh [Jewish] month [October 22, 1844].

When we came up to that point of time, all our sympathy, burden and prayers for sinners ceased, and the unanimous feeling and testimony was, that *our work for the world was finished for ever*. "As he [Christ] is, so are we in this world" 1 John 2:17. The living branches on earth, will sympathize with, and move in concert with the "true vine" in heaven. The reason why the living branches felt that their work was done for the world, was, because the 2300 days were ended, and the time had come for Jesus to *shut the door of the Holy*, to receive the Kingdom, and cleanse the Sanctuary. This change, so wonderfully described in Dan. 7:13, 14, answers to the coming of the bridegroom and shut door in the parable [of the virgins in Matthew 25]...*He is still merciful to his saints*, and ever will be; and Jesus is still their advocate and priest. *But the sinner, to whom Jesus had stretched out His arms all the day long, and who had rejected the offers of salvation, was left without an advocate*, when Jesus passed from the Holy Place, and *shut that door in 1844*. *The professed church, who rejected the truth* [in historical context, the "truth" is the 1844 message and its reinterpretation], *was also rejected, and smitten with blindness, and now, "with their flocks and with their herds" they go "to seek the Lord" as still an advocate for sinners; but, says the prophet, [Hosea 5:6,7] "they shall not find him; he hath WITHDRAWN HIMSELF from them. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have begotten strange children."*

²¹ There are a few occasions when EGW did not agree with the beliefs of her husband, James. However, in the majority of cases they did agree on what they taught.

The reason why they do not find the Lord is simply this, they seek Him where He is not; “he hath withdrawn himself: to the Most Holy Place.” The prophet of God calls their man-made converts, “STRANGE CHILDREN;” “now shall a mouth devour them, and their portions.”

Says the objector—“I believe that Jesus is still on the mercy-seat.” In answer to this oft-repeated assertion, let me say: Jesus never was on the mercy seat, and never will be. The mercy seat is the Most Holy Place, where Jesus entered *at the end* of the 2300 days. Its position is on the ark of the ten commandments; and over it are the cherubims of glory. Before the mercy seat stands our Great High Priest pleading His blood for Israel.²²

That Ellen White agreed with her husband’s theology on the shut door is evident, not only from her first two visions, but from other statements as well. In 1849, five years after her first vision, she said:

The reformations²³ that were shown me, were not reformations from error to truth; but from bad to worse; for those who professed a change of heart, had only warp (sic) about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, *so as to deceive God’s people*; but if their hearts could be seen, they would appear as black as ever.²⁴

This is [a] very important hour with us. Satan has come down with great power, and we must *strive hard*, and press our way to the kingdom. We have a mighty foe to contend with; but an Almighty Friend to protect and strengthen us in the conflict. If we are firmly fixed upon the *present truth*, and have our hope, like an *anchor of the soul, cast within the second veil*, the various winds of *false doctrine and error* cannot move us. The

²² James White, *The Present Truth*, May 1850, printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, pp. 351, 352.

²³ These “reformations” were either conversions or changed lives that were presented to the shut-door Adventists by other Christians as evidence that the door of mercy was still open.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Present Truth*, Aug. 1849, p. 22. Printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, p. 356.

excitements and *false reformations* of this day do not move us, for *we know* that the Master of the house rose up in 1844, and *shut the door of the first apartment of the heavenly tabernacle*; and now we certainly expect that *they* [in historical context, these are the pastors who rejected the 2300-day cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary message] will “go with their flocks,” “to seek the Lord; but *they shall not find him*; he hath withdrawn himself (within the second veil) from them.” *The Lord has shown me that the power which is with them is a mere human influence, and not the power of God.*²⁵

There is still more evidence that Ellen White taught a shut door of mercy. The following letter from O. R. L. Crosier, the architect of SDA sanctuary theology, was written to D. M. Canright under the date of December 1, 1887.

I kept the seventh day nearly a year, about 1848. In 1846 I explained the idea of the sanctuary in an article in an extra double number of the *Day Star*, Cincinnati, O. The object of that article was to support the theory that the door of mercy was shut, a theory which I, and nearly all Adventists who had adopted William Miller’s views, held from 1844 to 1848. Yes, I *know* [his emphasis] that Ellen G. Harmon—now Mrs. White—held the shut-door theory at that time.”²⁶

In connection with the shut-door theology of Adventists, Desmond Ford notes:

The Camden vision should also be considered. Once thought of as spurious,²⁷ Uriah Smith’s allusions to it in his *Visions of Mrs. E. G. White* indicate its authenticity²⁸...(This has been found

²⁵ Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 1850-03-01.

²⁶ Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 106, 107.

²⁷ There is some evidence that this “spurious charge” may have resulted from the attempt to suppress this vision. See Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 145–169.

²⁸ “The genuineness of this vision is acknowledged by Editor Uriah Smith and Elder J. N. Loughborough in their efforts to explain it away.” *Ibid.*, p. 127.

with some other early Ellen G. White documents.) Here it is and the sentiments fit exactly the years immediately following 1844.²⁹

Now we quote from the vision Ellen White received in Camden, N.Y., June 29, 1851, known as the Camden Vision.³⁰

The Lord shewed (sic) that he had, in answer to prayer, *removed his frown from this band*, and that they could have the smiles of Jesus, if they would live very humble, and walk carefully before the Lord, and *know that in every step that they took that God was guiding them*, and the band would be strong and would be a terror to their enemies; and the band must press together. Then I saw Bro. Wing and Bro. Hyatt³¹—that the enemy had been trying to destroy them—that they were praying for light upon a few texts of Scripture, and *the more they prayed the darker they grew*, and the enemy was shutting down a network of darkness over them; and just about as they were getting entirely shut in, they were delivered—the net was broken, and they escaped. *I saw the true light on these texts, &c.* I saw that this rebuke was given by Jesus to the Pharisees and Jews, who were filled with self-righteousness, and would only speak to or greet those who were just as full of self-righteousness and hypocrisy as they themselves were; and they entirely neglect and pass by those who did not make quite as much, and who did not receive greeting in the market as they did. *I saw that it did not in any way apply to this time—that we are now living in. Then I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies, but that should not cause US to pray for the wicked world, whom God had rejected*—when he prayed for his enemies, there was hope for them, and they could be benefited and saved by his prayers, and also after he was a mediator in the outer apartment for the whole world; *but now his spirit and sympathy were withdrawn from the world; and our sympathy must be with Jesus, and must be*

²⁹ Printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, p. 356.

³⁰ See Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, p. 127.

³¹ Ellen White mentions “Brother Hyatt” on several other occasions in her writings. See Manuscript Release, Vol. 1, p. 313; Vol. 2, p. 293; Vol. 4, p. 395.

withdrawn from the ungodly. I saw that God loved his people—and, in answer to prayers, would send rain upon the just and the unjust—I saw that now, in this time, that he watered the earth and caused the sun to shine for the saints and the wicked by our prayers, by our Father sending rain upon the unjust, while he sent it upon the just. I saw that the wicked could not be benefited by our prayers now—and although he sent it upon the unjust, yet their day was coming. Then I saw concerning loving our neighbors. I saw that scripture did not mean the wicked whom God had rejected that we must love, but he meant our neighbors in the household, and did not extend beyond the household; yet I saw that we should not do the wicked around us any injustice:—but, our neighbors whom we were to love, were those who loved God and were serving him.

As I have read and re-read the above vision, I am at an utter loss to comprehend the mind that could have written it. What does this teach about God? I get the picture of a God who is angry with his people and they must pray to remove his frown.³² What does this teach about prayer? The more they prayed the darker they grew. EGW speaks of seeing the “true light” on texts of Scripture, then twists them to mean exactly the opposite of their biblical, contextual meaning. Were not the Jews doing exactly what EGW recommends the shut-door Adventists to do: love only their own people? Is this not the same exclusive spirit that Jesus was trying to correct? Is not EGW’s message of “truth” directly opposed to the truth of Jesus as we know it from the Gospels? What kind of spirit is working here twisting truth, trying to control minds, undermining the gospel of love, grace, and mercy?

Ellen White continued to reinforce shut-door theology by making *false* analogies.

³² A term used over 250 times in the writings of Ellen White.

*The Jews were left in complete deception and total darkness. They lost all the light they might have had upon the plan of salvation, and still trusted in their useless sacrifices and offerings. They could not be benefited by the mediation of Christ in the Holy place. The heavenly Sanctuary had taken the place of the earthly, yet they had no knowledge of the way to the heavenly.*³³

I saw that the *nominal churches* [those who had rejected the 1844 sanctuary message], as the Jews crucified Jesus, had crucified these messages, and therefore they have no knowledge of the move made in heaven, or of the way into the Most Holy, and *they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there.* Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, *they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left,* and Satan, pleased with the deception of the professed followers of Christ, fastens them in his snare, and assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself, and works with his power, his signs and lying wonders. Some he deceives in one way and some in another. He has different delusions prepared to affect different minds. Some look with horror upon one deception, while they readily receive another. Satan deceives some with Spiritualism. He also comes as an angel of light, and spreads his influence over the land. I saw false reformations every where. The churches were elated, and considered that God was marvelously working for them, *when it was another spirit.* It will die away and leave the world and the church in a worse condition than before.³⁴

In summary of his research on the shut-door teachings of EGW, after mentioning her first vision, Robert B. Tower states:

As a result of this [her first vision] and later visions, belief in the shut door again took root and continued in this group—who later

³³ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 170.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

took on the name of Seventh-day Adventists—for *from seven to ten years*.³⁵

There is yet more fascinating background to the teachings of these Adventists between 1844 and 1851 that sheds light on many of the statements EGW made during this time. Joseph Bates, who was a close friend and coworker of James and Ellen White, in 1850 published a tract on the sanctuary. On page 9 he says:

The twenty three hundred years are complete, ending in the fall of 1844....Here his [Christ's] work ceased ministering and mediating for the whole world forever....Here the door is shut.³⁶

Then Bates goes on to state his position that the Day of Atonement will be seven years long.

The seven spots of blood on the Golden Altar and before the mercy seat, I fully believe, represent the duration of the judicial proceeding on the living saints in the Most Holy, all of which time they will be in their affliction even seven years....Then the number seven will finish the day of atonement....This is the duration of the third angel's message.³⁷

There is evidence that James and Ellen White accepted this teaching of Bates. This explains why EGW made statements about the shortness of remaining time. These seven years started October 22, 1844, and were to end on October 22, 1851.

As this date approached, Ellen White relates what was said to her in vision by her angel.

³⁵ Robert B. Tower, *The True Story of the Beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism and of Mrs. Ellen G. White's Claims*. Printed in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, p. 417.

³⁶ See Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, p. 112.

³⁷ Joseph Bates, "The Typical and Anti-typical Sanctuary," pp. 10–13, 15. As printed in *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 114.

In a view given June 27, 1850, my accompanying angel said, “*Time is almost finished*. Do you reflect the lovely image of Jesus as you should?” Then I was pointed to the earth and saw that there would have to be a getting ready among those who have of late embraced the third angel’s message. Said the angel, “*Get ready, get ready, get ready*. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died.” I saw that there was a great work to do for them and but *little time* in which to do it.³⁸

Some of us have had time to get the truth and to advance step by step, and every step we have taken has given us strength to take the next. But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a *few months*.³⁹

In September 1850 Ellen White had a vision in which she stated:

I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was *nearly finished* and that time can last but a *very little longer*.⁴⁰

In a letter to “Brother and Sister Loveland, dated November 1, 1850, EGW wrote:

My vision comes up before me and the words of the angel even now seem to ring in my ears, “Get ready, get ready, get ready. Time is almost finished, almost finished, almost finished. Cry, cry, for the arm of the Lord to be revealed, for the arm of the Lord to be revealed. Time is almost finished. What you do, ye must do quickly!”⁴¹

In a letter to Mrs. P. D. Lawrence, dated July 29, 30, 1850, Miss Sarah B. Harmon, the sister of EGW, wrote:

³⁸ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57. See also Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, p. 114.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, Letter 26, 1850, p. 2, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 8, pp. 222, 223.

I believe this is the last winter we shall see before Jesus, our great High priest, comes out. Oh, Let us live for God and sacrifice for him faithfully.⁴²

The above statements fit in perfectly with the Adventist teaching of the shut door and Bates' teaching that the Day of Atonement was to be seven years long. They also demonstrate a lack of assurance which comes from a misunderstanding of the gospel. They are to "get ready, get ready, get ready." Some will have to do in a few months what it took the rest of the Advent band years to do.⁴³ These statements demonstrate a trust in works and character development in order to have the assurance of salvation. When the gospel is understood correctly, it does not take long to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

D.M. Canright, in his book under the chapter "The Shut Door," gives much additional evidence to support the Adventist teaching of the closed door between the years 1844 and 1851.⁴⁴ Then he asks some very pointed questions.

Did Christ and the Holy Spirit lead these founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to lose for years all their burden and sympathy for sinners and cease to pray for them? Was Christ in sympathy with them when they taught that he no longer was a friend of sinners? Was he in sympathy with them when they taught that he was no longer an advocate for them, and that the whole world was rejected of God, left without the Holy Spirit, turned over to Satan, and that all churches save their own were only the synagogues of Satan, forts of the devil, in fact? Did a holy angel tell Mrs. White all that terribly false message? Such a

⁴² See Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, p. 117.

⁴³ "Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 64. Note the emphasis is on personal character development, not on trust in Christ.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–144.

theory seems like blasphemy. If God did not lead them then, has he led them since? Is he leading them now?⁴⁵

Chapter Summary

1. EGW and the other Adventists believed the door of mercy was shut on October 22, 1844 (shut door, first swing).
2. EGW and many other Adventists gave up the shut door some time between October 22, 1844 and December, 1844 (open door, second swing).
3. EGW, through her visions and writing, corrected the “error” of those who believed the door of mercy was still open, by teaching it was still shut (shut door, third swing). The evidence for this is:
 - a. In her first vision she said it was “impossible” for those who gave up the 1844 “truth” to be saved. She also stated that all the rest of the world was “rejected.”
 - b. In her second vision, EGW corrected the “error” of those who had given up the shut door.
 - c. Ellen White agreed with Joseph Turner who taught that the door of mercy was shut.
 - d. James White taught the door of mercy was shut.
 - e. EGW and other Adventists believed that the churches who were experiencing reformation and conversions were inspired by another spirit, that Satan had control of them, and they were caught in his deceptions. Their converts were called “strange children.”
 - f. Ellen White, in the Camden vision, taught that Adventists were not to love or pray for those

⁴⁵ Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 131, 132.

outside the household of faith, by which she meant they were to pray for no one outside their little Advent band.

- g. Ellen White said that the prayers of those who rejected the sanctuary message were useless.
 - h. Researchers, such as Dr. Ford and Robert B. Tower, believe that Adventists held to the shut-door teaching for at least seven years (1844–1851).
 - i. D. M. Canright, a contemporary of EGW, believed that the Adventists taught a shut door between 1844 and 1851, and he has considerable documentation to support his conclusions.
4. EGW and other Adventists misused Scripture including, but not limited to, Matt. 25:40 and Hosea 5:6, 7.
 5. EGW built some of her shut-door theology on the use of false analogies.
 6. There is some evidence to believe that EGW accepted the seven-year-Day-of-Atonement theory of Joseph Bates and expected Christ to come October 22, 1851.

Addendum

In addition to the many statements of Ellen G. White regarding the shut door listed in this chapter, we have discovered other statements that bear upon this teaching confirming once again that *Ellen G. White taught the shut door of mercy based on the visions she claims were given to her from God.*

I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which

attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.⁴⁶

Note carefully what is said here. (1) All who saw the light (the shut door of mercy, in 1844) and immediately rejected it were left in darkness. In context this can mean nothing other than that they were lost. (2) All those who accepted this shut door message and supposedly “received the Holy Spirit” that attended that message, then renounced their faith in that message and said they were deluded, thereby supposedly they rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them. In other words they had received the unpardonable sin. This means that those who rejected the error of the shut door of mercy in 1844 either immediately or at a later time are lost. This teaching could not have come from the Holy Spirit. It must have come from another spirit—the spirit of darkness. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (Jn. 14:17; 16; 13) not the spirit of error.

The Lord has shown me *in vision*, that Jesus rose up, and *shut the door*, and entered the Holy of Holies, at the 7th month 1844; but Michael’s standing up (Daniel 12:1) to deliver his people, is in the future.⁴⁷

Dear Brother and Sister, I have now written the vision God gave me. I am tired sitting so long. Our position looks very clear. We know we have the truth, the **midnight cry** is behind us, the door was shut in 1844 and Jesus is soon to step out from

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Word to the Little Flock*, 1847.

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, Letter 2, 1847, to Eli Curtis. Written April 21, from Topsham, Maine.

*between God and man. The sealing will then be accomplished—finished up.*⁴⁸

In the above quotation we have additional evidence that the “shut door” to which Ellen White refers to prior to 1851 usually, if not always, refers to the shut door *of mercy*. Notice that she links the “Midnight Cry” to the shut door. Thus linking it to the parable of Christ in Matthew 25:6-12. Also she states that Jesus will soon step out between God and man. This idea will be more fully developed in the theology of the investigative judgment when she will state that the righteous will have to live in the sight of a holy God without a mediator.

The first Sabbath we spent in Topsham, was a sweet, interesting time. It seems that Jesus Himself passed through our midst and shed His light and glory upon us. We all had a rich draught from the well of Bethlehem. The Spirit came upon me and *I was taken off in vision*. I saw many important things, some of which I will write you before I close this letter. *I saw Brother Stowell of Paris was wavering upon the shut door*. I felt that I must visit them. Although it was fifty miles off and very bad going, I believed God would strengthen me to perform the journey. We went and found they needed strengthening. There had not been a meeting in the place for above two years. We spent one week with them. Our meetings were very interesting. They were hungry for present truth. We had free, powerful meetings with them. *God gave me two visions while there*, much to the comfort and strength of the brethren and sisters. *Brother Stowell was established in the shut door and all the present truth he had doubted*. Strength was given me from on high so that my journey wearied me not at all and my health has been better ever since. Thank God He gives us strength as we need.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, Letter 5, 1849, to Brother and Sister Hastings. Written April 21, from Milton, Massachusetts.

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, Letter 2, 1847, to Eli Curtis. Written April 21, from Topsham, Maine. This letter appears in full in *A Word to the Little Flock*.

Here again is abundant evidence that Ellen White taught the shut door of mercy based upon several supposed *visions* from God.

Sabbath, March 24th, 1849, we had a sweet, and very interesting meeting with the Brethren at Topsham, Me. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the City of the living God. *There I was shown that the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, relating to the shut door, could not be separated*, and that the time for the commandments of God to shine out, with all their importance, and for God's people to be tried on the Sabbath truth, was when the door was opened in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary, where the Ark is, containing the ten commandments. This door was not opened, until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary in 1844. Then, Jesus rose up, and *shut the door* in the Holy Place, and opened the door in the Most Holy, and passed within the second veil, (sic) where he now stands by the Ark; and where the faith of Israel now reaches.

I saw the *commandments of God and shut door could not be separated*. I saw the time for the commandments of God to shine out to His people was when the door was opening in the inner apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and *shut the door* in the outer apartment and opened the door in the inner apartment and passed into the Most Holy Place, and the faith of Israel now reaches within the second veil where Jesus now stands by the ark. I saw that Jesus had opened the door in the Most Holy Place and no man can shut it; and that since Jesus had opened the door in the Most Holy Place the commandments have been shining out and God has been testing His people on the holy Sabbath.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Hastings, March 24-30, 1849.

In the two above quotations Ellen White claims that God showed her that the shut door could not be separated from the testimony of Jesus and the Sabbath. Exactly what she means by “testimony of Jesus Christ” in the above quote is not clear. It could be either one of the following: (1) the *pronouncement* of Jesus that the door of mercy was shut, or (2) that the statements of *Ellen White* (who Adventists define as the “testimony of Jesus”). In either case, it is again crystal clear that Ellen White taught that the door of mercy was shut in October 22, 1844 and that this teaching supposedly came from God based upon *multiple visions*.

How can it be that Adventists continue to hold in their statement of Fundamental Beliefs that the writings of Ellen G. White “...are a continuing and authoritative *source* of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction...”

For many years Adventist leaders have sought to either deny or cover up the fact that the shut door of mercy was taught through multiple visions of Ellen White. Now, they can no longer do that. They must decide if they will continue to promote error, or confess the truth that Ellen White taught multiple errors through her visions. The ball is in their court.